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**Grim New Intelligence
Assessment Released
On USSR Strategic Arms**

A NEW NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE, NIE 11-3-8, "paints a darker picture" of Soviet strategic arms progress than its predecessor, completed in the fall of 1977, informed Administration sources have told *AFJ*. The highly classified new assessment is nicknamed "NIE Eleven and Three-Eights."

According to sources who took part in preparing the assessment and are intimately familiar with its final content, it contains "nothing new or startling, but shows things moving more rapidly than before." Specifically, "the Minuteman problem is coming faster," according to one source, a reference to the land-based missile's increasing vulnerability to a Soviet first strike because "the whole accuracy picture" of Soviet ICBMs is "changing dramatically." Contributing to Minuteman's earlier than expected vulnerability is the fast rate at which the USSR has been "fractionating" its missiles, that is, adding greater numbers of warheads to them.

Sources say the new assessment projects "much uncertainty on Soviet force loadings," how many warheads of what type each missile carries. "We don't know how they're loaded; we can't look under the nose-cone." Under SALT II, the Soviets as well as the US would be prohibited from deploying land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles with more than ten warheads each. However, a *New York Times* report of March 14th by Richard Burt says that the CIA has evidence the Soviets have been adapting their largest missile, the SS-18, to carry 14 warheads.

The SS-18 was tested more than a year ago, in October of 1977, with a new warhead called "Mod 4" that demonstrated an accuracy of 0.15 nautical miles, or less than 300 meters. The Defense Department tells *AFJ* that it has no evidence the Soviets have *deployed* ICBMs with an accuracy better than 500 meters.

CIA 2.01 NIE (NIE 11-3-8)

GRG: SALT